

## REGIONAL POLITICS

NATO'S ROLE  
IN CENTRAL ASIA

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*Chapter One*  
The New NATO

- 1.1. In the years after the Cold War NATO “operates in an environment of continuing change” and has undergone a deep rooted transformation concerning its strategy, membership and operations. Initially NATO was conceived as an alliance with the aim of protecting its members’ territory from a large-scale aggression emanating from an “enemy” (after 1955 the Warsaw Pact became such an enemy). Its planning was based on the classical concept of war, i.e. confrontation of big military units on a broad theater. Use of nuclear weapons was included in its options, even only as a measure of last resort. NATO’s post-Cold War strategic agenda—German unification, the integration of Central and Eastern Europe, partnership with Russia and the Ukraine, and stabilization of the Balkans—is essentially complete or on the track of being completed. It cannot serve as the Alliance’s strategic purpose.<sup>1</sup>
- 1.2. In the words of Henry Kissinger “*today’s world is in a state of revolutionary disarray.*” NATO must keep pace with developments in the international stage and cope with new risks, dangers and threats which are smaller in scale but make Western societies more vulnerable.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See: F.S. Larrabee, *NATO’s Eastern Agenda in a New Strategic Era*, RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, CA, 2003, p. 174.

<sup>2</sup> See a very interesting study on NATO’s adaptation to new challenges: H. Haftendorf, *Das Atlantische Bündnis in der Anpassungskrise*, SWP-Studie, Berlin, February 2005, p. 7.

NATO's transformation began in the early 1990s and is still progressing. The Summits in Washington (1999), Prague (2002) and Istanbul (2004) have given NATO its new face. The Alliance is gradually becoming a political rather than military and a collective security instead of a collective defense organization.<sup>3</sup> It has adopted an "Open-Door Policy," with a result that any state willing and able to incorporate its values, strategies and tactics has an option to join it; NATO has recently accepted ten Central and Eastern European states as its members, thus contributing to a Europe whole, free and at peace.

- 1.3. NATO does not consider itself to be any country's adversary; there is not a single state which could be viewed as "the" enemy. Similarly, the enlarged Alliance does not threaten any country; on the contrary, it seeks a synergy of efforts by all states, including Russia, in order to successfully address the new challenges.
- 1.4. While collective defense and Art 5 operations remain its core purpose, NATO must also take account of the global context; its operations cannot be territorially limited. The traditional idea that war occurs solely between mutually exclusive spatial entities, either states or blocs, no longer holds. Permeable boundaries and shifting alliances mark the struggles of local militias and the local political economies of warfare in specific places. Enemies no longer so obviously control territories; violence is often constrained to particular places but its connections spill over the territorial boundaries of conventional geopolitical categories.<sup>4</sup> The greatest likelihood for people in America and Europe being killed does not emanate from a major military invasion, but from a threat posed by terrorists or failed states in the periphery armed with weapons of mass destruction attacking our citizens, our countries or our vital interests.<sup>5</sup>

Strategic and geopolitical "frontlines" are moving in the direction of the Caspian Sea, and to the deserts and mountains between Central Asia in the north and in India-Pakistan's disputed area of Kashmir in the south.<sup>6</sup> NATO must be able to strike where the origin of the threat/risk is located, not where its effects appear. The new strategy is designed to achieve assurance, dissuasion, deterrence and defense against any potential adversary in any environment.<sup>7</sup>

NATO is confronted with complex new risks to Euro-Atlantic peace and stability, including terrorism, oppression, ethnic conflict, economic distress, the collapse of political order and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; it is also charged with strengthening security and building stability in many regions of the world. Its activities include conflict prevention, crisis management and post conflict rehabilitation, strengthening nonproliferation and export control regimes and international arms control and disarmament accords, the fight against terrorism, organized crime, drug and illegal human trafficking as well as civil emergency planning.

The evolving threats have domestic and external sources and a transnational nature. Events in Afghanistan, where NATO leads the ISAF operation, have demonstrated that threats to our common security increasingly come from the periphery of the Euro-Atlantic area. As the Ger-

<sup>3</sup> See: J. Howorth, J.T.S. Keeler, "The EU, NATO and the Quest for European Autonomy," in: *Defending Europe: The EU, NATO and the Quest for European Autonomy*, ed. by J. Howorth and J.T.S. Keeler, New York, 2003, pp. 3, 14.

<sup>4</sup> See: S. Black, *After Two Wars: Reflections on the American Strategic Revolution in Central Asia*, Defense Academy of the United Kingdom, Conflict Studies Research Center, Central Asian Series 05/14, April 2005, p. 10.

<sup>5</sup> See: F.S. Larrabee, op. cit., p. 31.

<sup>6</sup> See: A. Bogaturov, *International Relations in Central-Eastern Asia: Geopolitical Challenges and Prospects for Political Action*, The Brookings Institution Center for Northeast Asian Policy Studies, Washington D.C., June 2004, p. 7.

<sup>7</sup> See: I. Berman, "The New Battleground: Central Asia and the Caucasus," *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 1, Winter 2004-2005, p. 61.

man Defense Minister succinctly said “*our security starts at Indukush.*” In this environment, international stability and security will increasingly depend on domestic reform on the one hand, and wide international cooperation on the other.

- 1.5. Changes have also affected NATO’s capabilities and command structure. It has brought about improvements in the capabilities needed to ensure the effectiveness of future multinational operations across the full spectrum of missions with a special focus on interoperability. The changes targeted deployability and mobility, sustainability and logistics, survivability and effective engagement capability, command, control and information systems. The Alliance aims at ensuring defense against chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons, command, control, communications and information superiority, enhanced interoperability and rapid deployment and sustainment of combat forces (Rapid Reaction Force). Recently, in Istanbul defense ministers signed a Memorandum of Understanding on strategic air- and sealfit.
- 1.6. As part of its transformation NATO is forging practical partnership with non-NATO countries with the aim of creating a more transparent world in which the scope of misunderstandings and mistrust is reduced. Central to this idea is the Partnership for Peace (PfP) program, which has become, since 1994 when it was launched, an important and permanent feature of the European security architecture.<sup>8</sup> Partnership provides a forum for consultations with Partners on the issues that are at the forefront of current security concerns.<sup>9</sup> Partnership has at its disposal a range of mechanisms available for meetings among all Allies and Partners, or in smaller but open-ended groups depending upon the subjects under discussion.<sup>10</sup> It has been deepened and broadened in order to meet the aspirations of different Partner countries and remain an attractive proposition to them.<sup>11</sup>

PfP is helping to expand and intensify political and military cooperation throughout the Euro-Atlantic area, to increase stability and strengthen security relationships based on the practical cooperation and commitment to democratic principles which underpin the Alliance. It commits NATO to developing, with each individual partner, a planning and review process (PARP), designed to provide a basis for identifying and evaluating forces and capabilities which might be made available for multinational training, exercises and operations in conjunction with Alliance forces. Furthermore, the Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) process is designed to bring together all the various cooperation mechanisms through which a partner interacts with the Alliance and to sharpen the focus on domestic reform; in particular, it enables individual partners to establish together with the Alliance a range of reform objectives, upon which the Alliance will provide advice and assistance.

A key element in NATO’s re-orientation to the new risks and threats is to make better use of the partnership relations developed over the past decade. In particular, NATO pays attention to expanded dialog and exchange of expertise with Partners on a variety of political and security issues. It helps them to develop modern and democratically responsible defense institutions, promotes the development of capabilities that provide a unique or high-value contribution, including a challenging exercise program, and provides mechanisms and instruments for enabling Partner contributions to the Alliance’s response to terrorism and protection of civilian populations against weapons of mass destruction.

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<sup>8</sup> See also: *Security through Partnership*, NATO Public Diplomacy Division 2005, p. 36 [www.nato.int/docu/pub-form.htm].

<sup>9</sup> See: H. Haftendorn, op. cit., p. 24.

<sup>10</sup> See: R. Weaver, “Continuing to Build Security through Partnership,” *NATO-Review*, Spring 2004 [hww.hq.nqto.int/nids/docu/review/2004/issue1/english/art1\_pr.html].

<sup>11</sup> See: *Security through Partnership*, p. 6.

- 1.7. The security challenges of today are multi-faceted and cannot be handled by any single institution on its own. NATO and other organizations concerned with security issues like the U.N. and its affiliated organizations, the OCSE and the EU as well as individual countries recognize the need to work together to build a web of mutually re-enforcing, interlocking security arrangements. In such co-operative efforts NATO will draw upon its comparative advantages, in particular setting standards for interoperability and preparing appropriate forces and capabilities by high-level training and exercises, but also its commitment to common values and solidarity in their implementation, and its role as “facilitator” in areas where it does not have a primary responsibility, such as border security and consequence management.
- 1.8. Summarizing, I think the new NATO can be considered, *first*, as a *set of values*—democracy, human rights, respect of the rule of law in both transnational and domestic affairs, peaceful resolution of disputes etc.—which hold the Alliance together and legitimize its operations; *second*, as enhanced *expertise* in defense and security issues providing an important mechanism for addressing threats to common interests and promoting interoperability; *third*, as a *culture of dialog and cooperation* coordinating transatlantic security and maintaining the transatlantic link, thus reaching consensus among the world’s democracies,<sup>12</sup> as well as integrating non-member countries, including Russia, into a broader Euro-Atlantic security framework. These are formidable tools for addressing contemporary threats, risks and challenges.

## Chapter Two

### NATO’s Priorities in Central Asia

- 2.1. The Atlantic Alliance is now angling to become a guarantor of security for countries in Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus. It is very difficult in this area to distinguish internal instability from a broader regional or even global one. Thus the presence of capable forces in and around Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus makes the region a pivotal theater or zone from where those capabilities can strike at belligerents in any one of numerous potential theaters from Eastern Europe to the Pacific.<sup>13</sup>

It becomes particularly important to understand the faultlines, geography and other challenges this part of the world presents: Internal political orders are authoritarian and fragile. Ethnic heterogeneity existing side by side with economic disparities can stifle civil strife. Pretexts for interstate conflict abound. Criminal activity and corruption are on the rise. Prospects for growth are different throughout the region. Disputes over the division of the Caspian seabed as well as the use of the waters of Syr Darya and Amu Darya rivers can lead to heightened tension. Refugee flows into the region could strain the treasuries and stretch the capacities of states to deal with the influx. The rise of insurgencies linked to radical Islam as well as the situation in Afghanistan can have an impact on terrorist activity in the region,<sup>14</sup> NATO will face them regardless of the depth of its commitment to the region.

<sup>12</sup> See: J. Lanxade, “Imagining a New Alliance,” in: *NATO Transformation: Problems and Prospects*, ed. by C.R. Nelson and J.S. Purcell, The Atlantic Council of the U.S., April 2004, p. 15.

<sup>13</sup> See: S. Black, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>14</sup> See: *Faultlines of Conflict in Central Asia and the South Caucasus. Implications for the U.S. Army*, ed. by O. Olikier and Th.S. Szayna, RAND Santa Monica, CA, 2003 passim; E. Wishnick, *Strategic Consequences of the Iraq War: U.S. Security Interests in Central Asia Reassessed*, Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle, PA, May 2004, p. 33 [<http://www.carlisle.army.mil/ssi>].

- 2.2. The inclusion of the Central Asian states in the PfP program formalized their relations to NATO, provided a mechanism for regional security cooperation, and established a basis for combined action.<sup>15</sup> NATO's presence in the region is a strategic and geopolitical fact; it has become a part of the strategic landscape in this part of the world. But in the eyes of governments of the region this must be legitimized by the effectiveness of its operations and in the eyes of populations by its contribution to reform.

The Istanbul Summit decided that the Alliance will put special focus on engaging with partners in the strategically important regions of the Caucasus and Central Asia, which might be distant from the Alliance's core, but are of vital importance in the new security environment. NATO has appointed a Special Representative of the Secretary General for the Caucasus and Central Asia as well as two Liaison Officers, one for the Caucasus and the other for Central Asia. These officers will help to develop relationships further as well as acting as a channel for increased dialog and cooperation in the region.

The point here is to work with local regimes and their militaries to shape the local environment, establish relations of mutual trust, confidence and interoperability and to raise local capabilities. All of these aspects translate into operational objectives of modernizing local forces' capability to meet threats to security and to work with NATO. In so doing, we pave the way to facilitating Central Asia's ultimate integration into the Euro-Atlantic political and military current, a process that can also provide leverage to help foster more democratic internal military structures and civilian democratic controls of the armed forces in these countries. Thus the hierarchy of operational goals starts with access and descends through modernization and its components to integration and its components.<sup>16</sup>

NATO will re-orient existing resources toward these two regions, consistent with its long-term strategy to enhance stability across the Euro-Atlantic area by encouraging and supporting reform. In implementing its cooperation programs (IPAP, PARP, PAP-T, PAP-DIB) NATO gives priority to these countries, provides enhanced training and education, and strives to help them manage the consequences of defense reform.

The needs of the Central Asian militaries and societies are diverse and each country has to be treated separately and in sensitive ways that build trust and offer practical improvements to their armed forces and security structures. In any event, there should be no misunderstanding that enhanced interest for the region does not mean a *carte blanche* for unconditional financing or supply of modern equipment. NATO should help these countries in moving away from past legacies and improving their managerial systems and planning.<sup>17</sup>

- 2.3. In view of these developments one distinguished scholar speaks about the "*Asianization of NATO*."<sup>18</sup> If this means that the center of gravity of NATO's concerns lies *today* in Asia, I could agree. But this cannot be understood as alluding that NATO's *membership* is going to be extended; today projection of stability is more important than a new enlargement.<sup>19</sup>

Neither does it mean that NATO is antagonistic to any other power or organization in the region. NATO is not building an empire but facing the political and strategic challenge of building legitimacy,<sup>20</sup> i.e. setting the foundations for a new order in the region based on liberal val-

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<sup>15</sup> See: E. Wishnick, *Growing U.S. Security Interests in Central Asia*, U.S. Army War College, October 2002, p. 3.

<sup>16</sup> See: S. Black, op. cit., p. 23.

<sup>17</sup> See: R.N. McDermott, "NATO Deepens its Partnership with Central Asia," *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, 17 November, 2004 [[www.cacianalyst.org/view\\_article.php?articleid+2836](http://www.cacianalyst.org/view_article.php?articleid+2836)].

<sup>18</sup> See: A. Bogaturov, op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>19</sup> See: H. Haftendorn, op. cit., p. 24

<sup>20</sup> See: S. Black, op. cit., p. 12.

ues, effective political, economic and defense reform and the fight against terrorism, organized crime, illegal human trafficking and corruption.

Russia's positive stance after 11 September and her participation in the war against terror, the campaign against WMD and in regional peacekeeping tasks as well as cooperation in the framework of the NRC, are an indication that the context in Central Asia has changed and that the "Great Game" is not going to be repeated.

2.4. Let me now address the priority areas, on which NATO and Central Asian states can concentrate their cooperation:

- One case in point is Afghanistan. Operating in Afghanistan, far away from NATO's traditional perimeter, highlights the reasons why Partnership is so important for the Alliance, and also why the Alliance needs to pay more attention to the needs of Central Asian states. Central Asian states are important partners in the war against terrorism and have provided, on a bilateral basis, useful support to our operations in Afghanistan. They have been instrumental in ensuring the logistic supply of ISAF forces. Through the negotiation and conclusion of transit agreements that provide vital staging posts for the resupply of our forces in Afghanistan, NATO and Central Asian states can help bring security and stability to the region.
- The fight against terrorism is a critical area of cooperation. But terrorism is a tactic of a small group of individuals who have chosen to wage a war on all "infidels."<sup>21</sup> Fight against terrorism is not an excuse to restrict democratic institutions, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law within our countries. We must protect and promote these values so that terrorism cannot find a fertile breeding ground.
- NATO intends to play a constructive role in reform processes leading to more effective defense institutions. The first task is to bring security services and the armed forces under effective democratic control and enhance the role of Parliaments in defense matters. The second task is to ensure that Partners' armed forces are appropriately sized, structured and funded as well as increasingly interoperable with NATO, so that they can meet the requirements of the new security environment and participate in NATO operations.
- Partnership must help tackling domestic reform. IPAP and PARP are very important instruments for bringing forward wider reform, modernization and good governance as well as defense reform, capability development and interoperability of forces. The key to this is the ownership by the nation concerned—so that achievable objectives can be set by the nation itself and cooperation can be tailored to its needs.
- Border security and control is of fundamental importance to some of our Partners in the Caucasus and, especially, in Central Asia and there is a definite requirement to deal with it in the framework of the implementation of the Istanbul Summit decisions. Effective border security is essential for cutting the supply routes of terrorist activity, cross-border illegal activities, including trafficking and potentially the movement of conventional weapons or WMD. NATO has already experience in this field. The underlying principle is that borders should be open but controlled and secure, under national responsibility in close cooperation in a bilateral, regional and international context.

NATO could organize a Border Security Advisory Board which would provide assistance to Partners in:

<sup>21</sup> See: B. Kerry, "Iraq Is the Wrong Answer, International Herald Tribune," 13 April, 2004, p. 7.

- transforming military border guards into a civilian law enforcement structure,
  - improving the efficiency of the national internal coordination mechanism on border management,
  - improving and modernizing the training of border security personnel,
  - improving the equipment of border security,
  - improving and modernizing cross-border communications with neighboring border management and security organizations and
  - improving national contributions to the regional and international interaction on border security and management.
- We need the ability to disrupt drug shipments destined for Europe. NATO's inclusion of a counter narcotics element in the Operation Plan for ISAF is a welcome move in the right direction.
  - There is a lot more on offer: Partnership projects range from disaster preparedness to defense conversion, to scientific and technical cooperation.
    - A good example is the Virtual Silk Road, a NATO-sponsored project that has established INTERNET connectivity between the countries of Central Asia, the Caucasus plus Afghanistan and the rest of the world. Through this project the scientific communities of the benefiting nations have experienced "order of magnitude" increases in their connectivity to countries of the Western world.
    - "Science for Peace" (SFP) projects support teams of Partner experts in cooperation with NATO country teams to address security related issues.
    - Other "Security through Science" projects include a project for the radiological threat assessment and survey of the Semipalatinsk Nuclear Test Site (Kazakhstan), a workshop on Re-use and Cleaning of Former Military Sites in Bishkek and a study on Radioactive Waste Disposal Sites in Turkmenistan.
    - Partnership for Peace Trust Funds is another example of practical cooperation. Trust Funds have been used to destroy more than two million anti-personal land mines in Albania, FYROM, Ukraine and Tajikistan. This mechanism has a serious potential and can be used in any country.
    - Environmental security is a high priority in all Central Asian countries. NATO is cooperating with the OSCE, UNDP and UNEP in a variety of studies and projects to benefit the countries of the region.
    - A long-term study entitled "Environmental Decision Making for Sustainable Development in Central Asia" is conducted with the participation of CAREC (Central Asia Regional Environmental Center) and other international organizations (OSCE, WHO). The main objective of this pilot project is to stimulate cooperation and, primarily, to encourage the integration of regional and democratic approaches within the fabric of the environmental policy of each of the countries of the region. Through enhanced public participation, which the project encourages, more technically effective democratically approved environmental decision making can be implemented. The study puts additional emphasis on initiatives related to environmental protection that serve to strengthen and expand the institutional infrastructure in the region (e.g. the judicial system).
    - Through Reintegration Grants NATO is trying to assist the countries of the region to address the "brain drain" of their scientists. This grant provides support for both scien-

- tists returning to their home countries to continue their scientific work and their institutions to enable the research facilities of their laboratories to be upgraded.
- In April 2003 the emergency management “Ferghana 2003” took place in Uzbekistan based on a natural disaster scenario.
  - NATO together with Finland is currently designing a series of courses oriented toward Central Asian Partners focusing on the areas of civil protection, natural disaster, anti-terrorism and general rescue.

## *Chapter Three*

### Conclusions

Summarizing, due to bilateral and multilateral efforts, a climate now exists in Central Asia where achieving a true co-operative security environment may be possible.<sup>22</sup> Much remains to be done concerning defense reform, bilateral and regional cooperation and building robust, effective and democratically controlled state institutions. The nations of the region must decide themselves on which items and at what speed they want the reform-process to proceed.

Depending on how ties with the Central Asian states develop, and on the future path of the fight against terrorism future activities may involve more counterterrorist efforts into Afghanistan, supporting the Central Asian states in their counterinsurgency efforts, peacemaking or peacekeeping after conflict emerges in the region, or responding to terrorist groups on the territories of Central Asian states themselves. A crisis in Central Asia or in the Caucasus could lead to the deployment of international peacekeepers or peacemakers, protection of energy and pipeline infrastructure throughout the region and protection and evacuation of foreign nationals.

For the future, cooperation within the PFP will provide the basic framework for developing NATO's relations with these countries. The main focus will be on providing secure routes to Afghanistan, as well as on activities such as peace support operations, border management, search and rescue and disaster relief. NATO sponsored activities designed to encourage better democratic practices, responsible budgeting under the control of the Parliament and civilian control of the military can help to foster political change over the long run.

NATO realizes the devastating long-term effects of poverty, underdevelopment, authoritarianism, tribalism and religious fanaticism for the region of Central Asia and the world. It has assumed the task, along with Allies, Partners and other interested international organizations and NGOs, of stemming a “clash of civilizations,” avoiding the “competition between the functional core of globalization and the dysfunctional periphery,”<sup>23</sup> and reducing in the future what Charles Kupchan calls the “*distance between the leading and lagging edges of history.*”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> See: D.L. Burghardt, “In the Tracks of Tamerlane: Central Asia's Path to the 21st Century,” in: *In the Tracks of Tamerlane: Central Asia's Path to the 21st Century*, ed. by D.L. Burghardt and Th. Sabonis-Helf, Center for Technology and National Security Policy at the U.S. National Defence University, Washington D.C., 2003, pp. 3, 17.

<sup>23</sup> See: A.K. Cebrowski, “Transformation and its Implications for NATO,” in: *NATO Transformation*, p. 2.

<sup>24</sup> See: Ch.A. Kupchan, *The End of the American Era: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Geopolitics of the Twenty-first Century*, A CFR Book, Alfred A. Knopf, November 2002, p. 336.